



## CAVHCS' 2011 Memorial Day Observance

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) conducted its annual Memorial Day observance Monday, May 30, at the Montgomery VA Medical Center, complete with patriotic music from the Capitol Sounds Band, a wreath laying ceremony, a 21-gun salute and of course Taps.

"The ground we stand on today, the very air we breathe was paid for time and time again by our Veterans," said Ricardo Randle, Director, of Montgomery's Regional Benefits Office, who hosted the event in the absence of CAVHCS Director Glen Struchtemeyer. "Every mountain between our coasts; every island over which an American Flag flies; every acre of farmland; every tree, every lake, every stream or field -was paid for by a Veteran. To those of you here today who served - who stood the watch or whose loved ones were lost in service or since their service - allow me to say as One VA...thank you."

U. S. Representative Martha Roby (AL, District 2) joined Director

Randle and Keynote Speaker Air Force Brig. Gen. Craig S. Olsen, Executive Officer of Enterprise Information Systems, Electronic Systems Center, Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Ala. at the dais.



Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Honor Guard presents the colors prior to the national anthem at this year's CAVHCS Memorial Day observance on the Montgomery VA Medical Center campus. (VA photo by Eric Johnson)

"I am so very proud to be here with you on Memorial Day," said Roby, a native of Montgomery. "Today, we remember our heroes. "We re-member their courage, acknowledge their sacrifice and honor their legacy."

The constant message shared by all during the CAVHCS Memorial Day observance was acknowledgment of sacrifice. "It's vital that we never lose sight of the price that was paid for us to enjoy our freedom," said Gen. Olson.

"The price of freedom has been paid whenever duty has called Americans to service," said Randle shortly before acknowledging Veterans in attendance from each era from World War II and the Korean War to Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.

One of those World War II Era Veterans was retired Chief Master Sergeant McGinnis Roi, who was shot

Please see *'Memorial'*

Page 2

## CLC Residents Enjoy Week-long Celebration

**By: Joice Promisee, RN, MSN**

*Associate Chief Nurse, Geriatric, EC&R*

National Nursing Home Week was celebrated in the Community Living Center (CLC) May 9-13, 2011. Kick-off ceremony was held on Monday, with the theme of "Fulfilling the Promise". There were eighteen (18) World War II Veterans in the CLC recognized. They were presented with a trinket necklace and thanked for their service to our country.

One of the World War II Veterans talked of his experiences, while he was on active duty and another World War II Veteran sang his favorite song. Several families visited to participate in the opening ceremony. The Veterans and their families were served cake and punch after the ceremony.

The celebration continued throughout the week as various time eras were featured throughout the week. Tuesday the Veterans traveled back in time to the Forties Era. Staff and visitors wore clothing and hair styles that were popular during that time. Food items served during the Forties Era were tang and coke and a game was played "Guess what the Forties slang phrase means," as the Veterans were entertained with music from the Forties.

Wednesday, we traveled back in time to the Fifties Era. Staff and visitors again wore clothing and hair styles

that were popular back then. The featured games during that era were paddle balls and yo-yos and the food was coke and root beer floats.

Thursday and Friday featured tie-dyed items from the 60s and a carnival-styled Spring Fling.



CAVHCS Community Living Center residents and staff released balloons to kickoff participation in May's National Nursing Home Week. (VA photo by Eric Johnson)

# CAVHCS All-Stars

When I first came to the VA I did not feel very welcome on arrival into the Optical Clinic. I believe the load had become too stressful for the crew to handle, but as time went on things changed. It has become much better in their greetings and expressions and I wanted express my thanks and appreciation to the staff in this section: Dr. S. Bordlee, Ms. Annie Gosha, Ms. Mee Chin Ho and Ms. Johnna Headley -- *Thanks again, Andrew D., Montgomery, Ala.*

I want to commend Dr. John Harris and his assistant Barbara Bristow for the outstanding treatment and service I have received from them. I am a Veteran of 24 years in the military and their total professionalism is always a pleasure to witness. Please convey my thanks and appreciation to them all. -- *William K., Montgomery, Ala.*

I would like to offer kudos to Voluntary Services staff especially Mr. Petty, Mrs. Myles, and all the people who make contributions. They are greatly appreciated. Clothing is always needed, sizes in demand are men's pants 32x32, 34x32, 36x32, 38x32. Mens Shoes size 8 to 14 and mens jackets large to 3 XL. Donations are always helpful and right on time. Whenever a request is made, Voluntary Services is always willing to help provide items in support of our Veterans. If they are not readily available, they make our donors aware. -- *Sincere Thanks, Patients Effects*

The Dental staff at CAVHCS was outstanding today. They were extremely efficient and went above and beyond the call of duty. They do a great job serving the Veterans and I want them to know that we appreciate what they do! -- *Sincerely, Barbara L. and Robert M. P., Jr.*

## 'Memorial'

*From Page 1*

down over the skies of Germany and held captive as a Prisoner of War for 18 months. "I saw a lot of people die flying missions over Germany," said Roi. "We exist as a nation better than most countries because of all Veterans. We can do things that other countries cannot do."

Traditionally held in front of the 72 year-old building's main entrance, which is currently being renovated, this year's Memorial Day observance was held adjacent to the Montgomery Campus' Parade of Flags overlooking Perry Hill Road.

"On this Memorial Day, we join our fellow Americans in a National Moment of Remembrance," said Roby initiating the most solemn sequence of the day's events, "by laying a wreath at the base of our national ensign; playing taps and rendering a 21-gun salute."

"It's an honor and a privilege to be a part of this," said Toby Frendberg, a Vietnam era Marine who was born on nearby Maxwell, Air Force Base. "It gives me chills."

For more images are available on the CAVHCS Facebook site at: [www.facebook.com/VACentralAlabama](http://www.facebook.com/VACentralAlabama)



## The CAVHCS Salute



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## Disaster Assistance after Tornadoes

# Help Encouraged for VA Home Loan Borrowers

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that special disaster assistance may be available to Veterans with VA-guaranteed home loans who have been affected by recent tornadoes in the South.

Veterans living in the designated disaster areas in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee may receive mortgage assistance through their loan servicers.

“VA wants to do everything we can to help Veterans and their families during this difficult time,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “It is important for Veterans to be aware of their rights and understand there are many resources available to help them recover from this disaster.”

VA strongly encouraged mortgage companies not to initiate any new foreclosures in the disaster areas for a period of 90 days. The agency also encourages mortgage companies that service VA-guaranteed home loans to extend every possible forbearance to borrowers who are in distress through no fault of their own. This includes suspension of reporting to credit bureaus and waiving late charges for affected borrowers.

There are almost 26,000 Veterans with VA-guaranteed home loans in counties in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee that have been declared eligible for individual assistance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Veterans should contact their insurance company as soon as possible to file claims for losses. At the same time, they need to contact their mortgage companies to let them know their circumstances.

Veterans should also start the FEMA disaster application process as soon as possible by calling 1-800-621-3362. Low interest loans, cash grants, and housing assistance may be available from agencies associated with the disaster recovery effort.

VA has information available on its web site ([www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans](http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans)) that provides basic guidance on options veterans should consider following a major disaster. Veterans may also contact their nearest VA Regional Loan Center at 1-877-827-3702.

Counties in Alabama affected by the tornado outbreak and that are eligible for individual assistance through FEMA include: Autauga, Calhoun, Cullman, DeKalb, Elmore, Etowah, Franklin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Marengo, Marion, Marshall, St. Clair, Sumter, Tallapoosa, Tuscaloosa and Walker.

Counties in Arkansas affected by the tornado outbreak include: Benton, Clay, Faulkner, Garland, Lincoln, Pulaski, Randolph and Saline.

Counties in Georgia affected by the tornado outbreak include: Bartow, Catoosa, Coweta, Dade, Floyd, Greene, Lamar, Pickens, Polk, Spalding, Troup and Walker.

Counties in Mississippi affected by the tornado outbreak include:

Clarke, Greene, Hinds, Jasper, Kemper, Lafayette and Monroe.



Larry Thomas rolls 55-gallon drums used to store potable water for sanitation purposes on to a VA truck, which also carried pallets of drinking water and food items from CAVHCS to go to the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center shortly after tornadoes on April 27, brought massive destruction to the area.

## VA-Army Agreement to Transform Health Care for Vets

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of the Army are working together to provide cutting-edge simulation-based training for medical staff to enhance the quality of patient care at VA medical facilities across the Nation.

“This agreement between the VA and the U.S. Army strengthens an important relationship that helps VA deliver better health care and value for all

of our Nation’s Veterans. It also allows VA to make the best and most cost-effective purchases of simulation equipment, while also moving us toward system-wide standardized simulation training,” said Dr. Robert A. Petzel, VA Under Secretary for Health.

The \$5 million agreement utilizes the expertise of the Army’s Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation (PEO STRI) to provide support and services for simulation equipment and supplies acquisition in support

of VA’s Simulation Learning, Education and Research Network (SimLEARN) Program.

The SimLEARN Program was established by VA to develop national simulation-based clinical training

throughout its more than 150 medical centers around the Nation. As the Army’s acquisition agency for simulation and training devices, PEO STRI has unique expertise in the area of acquisition

services for medical instruction and related program management services. “This agreement certainly joins our active and retired service men and women in a way they’ve never been connected before,” Petzel said. “The cutting-edge modeling and simulation expertise that our combat medics and combat lifesavers receive for treating active duty Soldiers will be leveraged for supporting the training efforts of medical personnel who care for our veterans. It’s truly a win-win situation for our nation’s heroes.”



# CAVHCS Photo Gallery

The month of May saw CAVHCS celebrate National Nurses Week, Occupational Health Month, Memorial Day, Family Day National Nursing Home Week and even found time to hold an Employee Appreciation Luncheon and give away a pair of 42 inch flat screen TVs! (VA photos by Eric Johnson and Robin Johnson)



## Vaccinations Update: Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis

By: **Mary Catherine Porch, APN**

*CAVHCS Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager*

The bacteria that cause tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis still live in our environment. This necessitates continuous and diligent vaccinations for children and adults.

The bacterium that causes tetanus lives primarily in soil and animal excrement. Most people are familiar with receiving the vaccine after stepping on a rusty nail. However, this is not the only cause for concern regarding exposure to tetanus. Any wound could be a source of entry for this bacterium and requires an assessment of vaccination status at the time of injury and every 10 years.

One in ten individuals infected with tetanus will die from the disease. There are over 200 cases yearly in the United States. The disease causes severe tightening of the muscles. "Lockjaw" occurs when the muscles of the jaw become so tight that the individual cannot eat or swallow. Treatment and supportive care in an intensive care unit are needed.

Diphtheria and pertussis are spread from person-to-person by droplets in the air when a person who is carrying the bacteria coughs or sneezes. The bacterium of diphtheria infects the nose and throat making it difficult to breathe. It may also spread to other organs of the body damaging the heart, kidneys and the nervous system. Illness is usually severe and also requires hospitalization. The disease is fatal in 10% of those who become ill from diphtheria.

Pertussis is also known as whooping cough,

because of the whooping noise made when a patient with pertussis takes a breath. Violent coughing is associated with pertussis and patients have difficulty breathing. A person of any age can get pertussis, but it is most damaging and likely to cause death in infants. The disease is highly contagious and spreads very quickly from person-to-person. Infants can easily get pertussis from adults. In most adults the symptoms are less severe.

The vaccinations for these diseases are combined in one shot and available as Td (tetanus + diphtheria) or Tdap (tetanus + diphtheria + pertussis). After having received the initial childhood doses, a booster shot is needed every ten years. All adults ages 19-65 should have the Tdap (pertussis containing) vaccine at least once and then the Td (which does not contain pertussis) every ten years. The Td shot is generally given to veterans over the age of 65 unless they are in close contact with an infant less than 12 months of age. In that case the Tdap is given at least once in place of the Td vaccine.

There are special circumstances for those Veterans who are pregnant. Before getting any vaccination, notify your provider if you think that you are pregnant.

If you have not been vaccinated within the past 10 years or you cannot remember the last time you were vaccinated, be sure to ask your provider about receiving the Td or Tdap vaccination. If your provider encourages you to receive a vaccination, notify him or her of any previous allergic reactions to vaccinations and ask any questions that you have. If the vaccination is right for you, seriously consider saying "Yes". You, your family, friends and the rest of us will be glad you did.

For complete information on vaccinations visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or visit the Veteran and Family Education Center. Healthy living to you!



## NASA Launches, VA Payload

Space Shuttle Endeavour's May 16<sup>th</sup> launch, with its research payload for two new vaccines aboard, marked yet another milestone in VA's longstanding collaboration with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The payload, which carries National Pathfinder Vaccine 10, is the last in a series working toward vaccines for two common infections: salmonella, which commonly contaminates the U.S. food chain, leading to food recalls and gastrointestinal illnesses, and an antibiotic resistant form of Staphylococcus aureus, also known as "golden staph," the most common bacterial agent found in combat infections.

By using the unique environment of microgravity to determine the cellular changes that determine bacterial virulence, especially changes in gene functioning, scientists have sought to use these space flights to help speed vaccine development.

"The NASA space program has been invaluable to advancing VA research," says VA Chief Research and Development Officer, Joel Kupersmith, MD. "The knowledge gained from this outstanding collaboration has improved health care for our Nation's Veterans and has demonstrated the vital role research partnerships play in VA's mission to provide Veterans with the care and benefits they have earned."

For more information on VA research, please see [www.research.va.gov](http://www.research.va.gov).



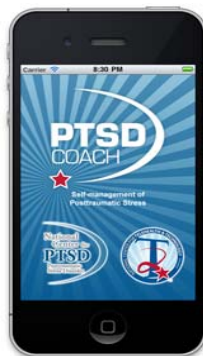
## PTSD, there's an 'App' for that!

The PTSD Coach smartphone application (app), launched in April by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD), has already helped more than 5,000 users connect with important mental health information and resources.

"This new tool is about helping Veterans and Servicemembers when and where they need it," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are encouraged so many have already downloaded (available at [www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp)) this resource and hope many more will utilize this convenient tool to access VA services."

The app lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with public and personalized sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD, and teaches helpful strategies for managing PTSD symptoms on the go.

Currently, the PTSD Coach app has received perfect customer review scores on the iTunes App Store. Comments from Veterans and family members are overwhelmingly positive and one user describes the app as "a must for every spouse who has a family member with PTSD." Professionals have sent positive reviews, suggestions and offers to collaborate on research evaluating the PTSD Coach app.



## Joint Commission Health Care High 5

### IN THE NEWS

**1 New Joint Commission Speak Up™ Dialysis Campaign.** The Joint Commission's new Speak Up™ campaign, "Dialysis: Five ways to be active in your care at the hospital," covers topics such as finding out how dialysis should be managed during hospitalization, avoiding infections in the hospital, asking about medications, talking with the hospital dietician, and planning for a return home. Visit [www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/18/Speakup\\_Dialysis\\_Final.pdf](http://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/18/Speakup_Dialysis_Final.pdf) for more information.

**2 New Government Vaccine Web Site Launches** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has created a new Web site - [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov) - to educate consumers about vaccination. The site includes content about recommended vaccines, the important information for getting vaccinated, tips on travel health, and information on state requirements.

**3 Feds Unveil Health Care Improvement Strategies** HHS has unveiled a national Strategy for Quality Improvement in Health Care, representing the first effort to establish national goals and priorities for health care quality improvement. A report to Congress available at [www.healthcare.gov/center/reports/quality03212011a.html](http://www.healthcare.gov/center/reports/quality03212011a.html) explains the strategy.

### 4 Joint Commission Releases new Speak Up™ Safety Video

The Joint Commission has released the first in a series of animated Speak Up videos to encourage patients to speak up and be active participants in their health care. View the video here: [www.youtube.com/user/TheJointCommission#p/a/f/0/EccuE-2\\_2E](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheJointCommission#p/a/f/0/EccuE-2_2E).

**5 Some Seniors Lack Preventive Care** Critical gaps exist between older Americans who receive potentially lifesaving preventive services and those who do not, according to a new report from four federal health agencies. Visit [www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/Clinical\\_Preventive\\_Services\\_Closing\\_the\\_Gap\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/Clinical_Preventive_Services_Closing_the_Gap_Report.pdf) for the full report.

CAVHCS nurses release balloons during the closing ceremony of this year's Nurses Week activities outside the Montgomery VA Medical Center. Activities included in-service training classes as well as a picnic on the Tuskegee VA Medical Center. (VA photo by Robin Johnson)



 <b>2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS</b> VA OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS 						
		<h1>June 2011</h1>				
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<input type="checkbox"/> Vision Research Month <input type="checkbox"/> National Safety Month <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Wellness Month <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month			1 *Heimlich Maneuver Introduced (1974)	2 *Nursing Assistants Day	3	4
<b>National Headache Awareness Week (June 5-11)</b>						
5 *World Environment Day *National Cancer Survivors Day	6 *D-Day Anniversary (1944)	7	8	9	10 *Alcoholics Anonymous Founded (1935)	11
<b>National Flag Week (June 12-18); Men's Health Week (June 13-19); Nursing Assistants Week (June 16-23)</b>						
12	13	14 *Flag Day *Army Established (1775)	15	16	17	18
<b>Health Care Risk Management Week (June 20-24)</b>						
19 *Father's Day	20	21 *Battle of Okinawa Ends (1945)	22 * Summer Begins *GI Bill Signed into Law (1944)	23	24	25 *Korean War Begins (1950)
26 *United Nations Charter Signed (1945)	27 *National HIV Testing Day	28	29	30	<input type="checkbox"/> Aphasia Awareness Month <input type="checkbox"/> Scleroderma Awareness Month <input type="checkbox"/> Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Month <input type="checkbox"/> Hernia Awareness Month	

The CAVHCS Community Calendar is not intended to be an all-inclusive, official calendar. It is intended rather to provide a medium for CAVHCS Salute to share upcoming events.

If you would like to add a CAVHCS event please email details directly to [alan.bloom@va.gov](mailto:alan.bloom@va.gov). Submissions are not guaranteed to be published. Editorial considerations will be made for propriety, promptness and print space.